1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

her *tsu* and prevent any possibility of endogamy, and since the Min Chia surnames for the most part appear to be Chinese in origin, it is an open question whether the use of surnames by this people is not a comparatively recent consequence of contact with the Chinese. It is true that the Min Chia pronounce their names in a way very strange to Chinese ears. The common surname which a Min Chia writes as Wang, using the character employed by the Chinese, is pronounced Wa, since the Min Chia language has no final *ng*. But when, as in the case of the name Ch'en, the Min Chia pronounce it Tso, one may be inclined to doubt whether this is really the Chinese word at all, and not perhaps a Min Chia surname conventionally written in Chinese with the character for Ch'en.

The Min Chia social structure is therefore really a combination of territorial units, the village, worshipping a common *Ber Dser* or Founder, and kin groups in which the family rather than the Chinese *tsu* is the unit. The family in this sense must be understood as the greater family, or joint family, in which married sons and their children continue to dwell under the paternal roof. This is the ideal, as with the Chinese, but in practice, as the Min Chia themselves admit, it is rarely carried out for a long period. The married sons may in fact live in the parental home for some years, but on the death of the parents they usually divide up the property and set up separate establishments. This indeed, sometimes happens during the lifetime of the parents, when the sons marry, but more often this "division of the family" as it is called, merely means that the young married couple occupy a separate wing of the family house, and there keep a separate establishment. In some cases on marriage the son is given a share of the family land and henceforth manages independently of his parents, and this arrangement is said to be increasingly common. It is perhaps significant of this

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

596 tendency to divide the great family that in the Min Chia language no distinction is made between the word for family and that for house, both being *hao*. To the Min Chia therefore, one house, one family, is the natural thing, and it is not easy, when asking about the population of a village, to make the distinction, how many houses? and how many families?

582 It might be expected that the fact that the Min Chia do not recognise the Chinese rule of exogamy would prove a barrier preventing intermarriage between the two peoples, but it does not in practice do so. Among the wealthier class of Min Chia (those with city connections), few families could be found who are not related to their Chinese neighbours on the distaff side, but even these families who are always well educated by Ta Li standards, and in many ways have assimilated Chinese culture, still not only condone marriage with persons of the same surname of the same *tsu*, but actually contract such marriages. When asked whether this custom is not in fact contrary to Chinese ideas, they will reply that that may be so in other parts of the country, but that "here in Ta Li we have always done so in the past". This being considered an adequate reason for continuing a custom which Chinese from other provinces regard with shocked amazement. The educated Min Chia remain quite unaffected by this attitude on the part of strangers and it is not uncommon to see inscriptions on a tombstone bearing the names of husband and wife of the same surname, inscriptions which scandalise Chinese visitors. The resident Chinese families, who have themselves intermarried with the Min Chia, now accept this custom with an easy toleration, but do not practise it themselves. Thus a Chinese family will accept the daughter of a Min Chia family, although they know that the girl's parents were of the same *tsu*, but they themselves would never give a daughter in marriage to a family of their own surname. This state of affairs is perhaps

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

CHAPTER 8

THE FAMILY AND THE HOME

596 IN the Min Chia language the word "*hao*" means both a "family" and a "house"; every house is the home of some family, and a family dispersed without a home is something unheard of and unknown. This well expresses the central importance of the home in the social organisation. The Min Chia have few institutions which transcend the family or gather individuals into an organisation not founded on a kin group. The village it is true has its headmen, and as has been pointed out the worship of the Ber Dser, the Founder, is not confined to his descendents in the male line or to those of the same surname. But the village is after all only a group of families most of which, if not indeed all, are interrelated on the female side. There are no age classes, no societies in which boys or young men can find a centre of social organisation distinct from that of the family. For most Min Chia therefore the family is the social unit in which he passes his whole life. If he is a peasant farmer, he cultivates fields held jointly with his brothers, if he turns to business he becomes a partner or assistant in a family shop or small business in which none but kinsmen are employed, except for the most menial duties.

573 One exception exists, for the better off classes at least, in the schools. The peasant boy who only attends the village school for a few years meets there none but his fellow villagers, many of whom are related to him in some degree, and all already well known. But the son of a more wealthy family who is sent to the Middle School in the city makes contacts beyond the narrow circle of relatives and villagers. He meets boys from other villagers, or from other families

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

573 old China, is treated with a greater deference, based not on fear, but on that admiration for learning which is so deeply rooted in Chinese cultural tradition.

There can be no doubt that this attitude has been taken over by the Min Chia from their Chinese neighbours and rulers. It is perhaps reinforced among them by the fact that learning, which means Chinese learning, involves the study of a foreign language and thus sharpens the distinction between the literate and the unlettered. Min Chia who have passed through the Middle School have in the process become a distinct group, to whom Chinese is as familiar as their own language, sharing interests and experiences which their less educated relatives do not understand and cannot appreciate. The school has become for them a new kind of greater family, for just as Chinese tradition accords to the teacher the respect due to a father, not merely in school, but in society generally, so schoolmates feel towards each other the intimacy, if not always the affection, otherwise reserved for kinsmen. Friendship between young men largely compensates for the absence of free social intercourse between the sexes, and such friendships are almost always based either on kinship or on fellowship at school.

• 596 It is still customary in Min Chia families for the married sons to remain in the paternal home, at least during the lifetime of the parents, and consequently a Min Chia home is usually fully occupied with numerous children, unmarried daughters, daughters-in-law, grandchildren and [581] other relatives. In a culture where Ancestor Worship plays a major rôle it is natural that the bearing of children, especially sons, should be considered the first duty of women, 584 and the principal object of marriage. No Min Chia mar- 596 riage is arranged by the free choice of the bride and groom, except in the irregular elopements discussed earlier, and consequently affection and companionship, though these

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

may happily come after marriage, are not pre-determining reasons for a marriage. The wealthier families, moving with the times, are beginning to realise that education for girls is not a mere waste of money, or a whim of some old scholar to be indulged in favour of a favourite granddaughter, as was once the case. To-day a young man of good family expects that his wife shall be able to read and write and have some general education. Nevertheless the duty of a wife is still to bear children, keep the home, and perhaps help to run the shop. She may have her women friends, usually drawn from relatives and in-laws, but there is little social life shared by husband and wife. He goes out to see his friends alone, or entertains them in his own home without his wife being present, although among the more advanced families he may present her to the guests before the meal.

A newly married bride has little independence in her husband's home, for it is controlled by her mother-in-law, or if she be already dead, by a sister-in-law senior to herself, or some other female relative of her husband's family. Her happiness will depend on the character of these women, for her husband has little to say in the home, and if she is disliked by his mother, he can do nothing to alleviate her lot. The best and most certain way of obtaining consideration is to give birth to a son, and if the child lives her position in the home is assured. Unfortunately the infant mortality in a country where medical knowledge is slight and the services of a skilled doctor unobtainable, is naturally very high. So much is this the case that no Min Chia will celebrate the birth of a child until it has lived at least a month, and it is not given a name until it has survived a year. Then indeed the family begin to feel that they have really got a new member, and the important question of the name is decided.